

**NOMINATION STATEMENT BEFORE THE SENATE HOMELAND
SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS COMMITTEE FOR RICHARD
LOUIS SKINNER AS INSPECTOR GENERAL**

JULY 18, 2005

Chairman Collins, Senator Akaka, and members of the committee, thank you for having this hearing today on my nomination to serve as the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security.

Before I proceed with a brief opening statement, I would like to introduce my wife, Barbara, and my youngest daughter, Heidi, who are seated behind me in the first row. My oldest daughter, Tasha, who resides in San Francisco, was unable to be here today. I wish to thank them for their support, encouragement, and many sacrifices over the years.

I also wish to thank Senator Warner for taking time out of his busy schedule to be here today on my behalf and for his extraordinary kind words of support. He is a public servant of the highest order whom I have come to admire and respect throughout my federal career.

I express my sincere thanks and appreciation to President Bush for the confidence and support that he has shown by nominating me for such a high federal position. I am truly honored. The importance of the department's mission cannot be overstated. I cannot think of anything more important than protecting our homeland against another terrorist attack. And, by conducting independent and objective audits, inspections, and investigations, and keeping the Secretary and the Congress fully and currently informed of problems, the Inspector General can play a very important role in aiding the department accomplish its critical mission.

Since their arrival at the department several months ago, I have had the opportunity to meet with Secretary Chertoff and Deputy Secretary Michael Jackson on several occasions. They both underscored their support for me and their appreciation and understanding of the Inspector General's oversight role and dual reporting responsibilities. I thank them both for their support. Based upon my experiences to date, I am very confident that, if confirmed, I will have a close and collaborative working relationship with the Secretary and Deputy Secretary, as well as their management team.

In my capacity as Acting Inspector General and deputy inspector general, I have had the privilege to serve with some of the most knowledgeable, hard working, and dedicated employees in the federal government. I cannot begin to tell you how rewarding it has been over the past 28 or so months to work side by side with the men and women currently employed with the department and its OIG. It is truly an honor to be associated with such a cadre of conscientious public servants. If this committee and the Senate see fit, I would relish the opportunity to serve as the Inspector General.

I would like to take a moment to provide you with a very brief summary of my work experiences and what I would bring to the Inspector General job, if confirmed. I feel as though I have been training for this opportunity for the past 36 plus years. I have spent my entire federal career in Inspector General organizations dedicated solely to the implementation of the principles specified in the Inspector General Act. I am deeply committed to the mission of Inspectors General. If confirmed, I would bring that experience, knowledge, dedication, and independence to my job as the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security.

Before joining DHS as its deputy inspector general in March 2003, I was acting IG at the Federal Emergency Management Agency, now also known as DHS' Emergency Preparedness and Response Directorate, between October 2002 and February 2003. I was FEMA's deputy inspector general from April 1996 to September 2002. Between June 1991 and March 1996, I worked as the assistant inspector general for audits at FEMA. Before that, I worked in IG offices at the State, Commerce, Justice, and Agriculture departments, rising through the ranks in a wide variety of management and executive positions. My background and experience have afforded me the opportunity to participate in and direct all operational functions associated with an Office of Inspector General. I believe this experience has prepared me to perform the duties of the Inspector General of the Department of Homeland Security with confidence and integrity.

There are several lessons I learned over the years. One is the importance of teamwork. Recognizing the unique and independent nature of the OIG function, the Inspector General must, at the same time, work to build relationships with department managers, the Secretary, and Congress, based on trust and mutual respect, and a shared commitment to improving operations and effectiveness. If confirmed, I pledge to maintain continuous open dialogue with both the Secretary and the Congress, to keep both the Secretary and the Congress currently informed, and to promote the open exchange of information and ideas. Second, it is imperative that the Inspector General is flexible and innovative. The world we live in is constantly changing, and the challenges we face are formidable. It is important that the Inspector General has the flexibility to respond to unanticipated requests for an objective review, customized to fit the assignment, and in time to meet the need for a quick response. If confirmed, I would stand ready to initiate special reviews responsive to requests from the Secretary or Congress on short notice. The third, and possibly most important lesson is to never "rest on your laurels." As an agent of positive change, to borrow a term coined by the President's Council on Integrity and Efficiency, the Inspector General must continually strive to do better, to anticipate ways in which operations can be improved, both within the department and within the OIG itself.

If confirmed, I would very much look forward to working closely and routinely with this committee, as well as the many other congressional committees with homeland security oversight responsibilities, and I pledge to carry out my responsibilities as Inspector General to the very best of my ability, with enthusiasm and dedication, and in an objective, independent, and apolitical manner.

I would be pleased to answer any questions.